

(٢٨) كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

(٢٩) هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

***How do you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life? Again He will cause you to die and again bring you to life; then you shall be brought back to Him (28).***

***He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens; and He know all things (29).***

## General Comment

The talk reverts again to the initial topic. The beginning of the chapter dealt with three categories of mankind; then all were addressed together (verses 21–27) with the words, “O men”, Now these verses describe the same subject with a grater detail.

The twelve verses, starting from here, depict the reality of man; show the potentialities of perfection which Allah has endowed him with; delineate the vast scope of his inner being; describe the various stages – death and life, and again death and life; then the return to Allah – through which he passes in his journey, explaining that the final destination is Allah.

In this context, the verses describe some basic bounties of Allah upon him – creative as well as legislative. He created for him all that is, in the earth and made the heaven subservient to him. He made him His deputy on the earth, ordered the angels to prostrate before him, put the first man into the Garden, opened for him the door of repentance and enhanced his prestige by guiding him to His worship. In this background, the opening words, “How do you deny Allah”, serve to emphasize the grace

and bounty of Allah on man.

## Commentary

**Qur'an: *How do you deny Allah . . . you shall be brought back to Him:***

The verse is somewhat (though not exactly) similar to the verse 40:11:

***They shall say: "Our Lord! twice didst Thou give us death, and twice hast Thou give us life, so we do confess our faults; is there then a way to get out?"***

This (later) is one of the verses that prove an *al-barzakh* (البرزخ = intervening period or life ) between this world and the next. It says that Allah gives death twice. First is the death that transfers us from this world.

But when and where shall we be given the second death? Giving of death presupposes a preceding life. It means that man shall be given a life in the period intervening between this first death and the Day of Resurrection. This argument is solid, and it has been offered in some Tradition too.

Question: Both verses have exactly the same connotation. Both mention two deaths and two lives. According to the verse 2:28, the stage before the life of this world has been called the first death. Then comes the first life in this world, followed by the second death transferring the man to the next world, and lastly will come the second life on the Day of Resurrection.

The second verse (40:11) too should be interpreted in the same way, because both have the same import. It means that after the death of this world, there is no life before the Day of Resurrection.

Reply: It is wrong to say that the two verses have the same connotation. The verse 2:28 mentions one death, one causing to die and two givings of life; while the verse 40:11 is talking about two givings of death and two givings of life.

There is a world of difference between "death" and "causing to die". "Causing to die" shows a preceding life; while "death" can be used just for absence of life – even when there was no life before it.

The verse 40:11 refers to the death after this life, then the life of the intervening period, then the death after that, and finally to the life on the Day of Resurrection. The verse 2:28 on the other hand, refers first to the lifeless state ("death", and not "causing to die") before coming to this world, then goes on mentioning this life, then death and then the life of the intervening period. There will be some delay before man is returned to his Lord.

The conjunctive used "*thumma*" (ثُمَّ = then) denotes some delay. Its use here supports this explanation because after the life of the intervening period there shall come again a death and only then the man shall be returned to Allah.

**Qur'an:** *and you were dead and He gave you life:* It shows the reality of man and his existence. He is a being, ever-changing, ever proceeding on his path of perfection, step by step, stage by stage. Before coming into this world, he was dead, then he was made alive by Allah and came here; again he will be caused to die and then be made alive again.

Allah says:

● . . . ***and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract, of water held in light estimation. Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit . . .*** (32:7-9);

● . . . ***then We did grow it into another creation; so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators*** (23: 14);

● ***And they say: "What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new generation?" Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: "The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die, then to your Lord you shall be brought back"*** (32: 10-11);

● ***From it We created you and into it We shall send you back from it will We raise you a second time*** (20:55).

The verses will be explained when we shall come to them; they have been quoted here only to show that man is a part of the earth, he was created from it, gradually developed until he grew into "another creation"; this "another creation" proceeds on the path of his perfection; then the angel of death completely removes this "man" from the body; and he returns to Allah. This is the path which the man has to take to.

The divine decree has planned the universe in such a way that every thing is related to every thing else; there is a constant action and reaction between it and the rest of the creation. Man too influences, and is in turn influenced by, all that exists in the earth and in the heavens – the elements and their characteristics, the animal world, the vegetable world, the minerals, the water, the air and, in short, every creation of nature.

The fact is that the scope of man's activities is much greater, and his circle far bigger than anything else's. He has been given thinking and reasoning powers, and, as a result of this unique gift of Allah, he influences the other creatures, manages them, arranges and rearranges them, manipulates them, destroys them, amends them and perfects them, on a scale unheard of outside his circle. Every creature is under his domain.

Sometimes he imitates nature by creating synthetic items for his needs; at other times he sets some forces of nature against the others. In short, he obtains, by all possible means, whatever he wants from

whatever he wants. Passage of time has further strengthened his hands; now he has deeper insight in the working of nature, and manipulates the system even more effectively.

That is so that Allah may establish the reality by His words, and so that the truth of His speech may be seen even more clearly:

***And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself (45:13).***

The verse following the verse under discussion, that is, 2:29, states the same fact:

***He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heavens, so He made them complete seven heavens.***

The context – description of the bounties of Allah bestowed on man – shows that it was for the benefit of man that Allah directed Himself to the heavens and made them complete seven. (Ponder on the point!)

This is the path taken by the man in his journey of existence; and this is the imprint of his activities on the universe; it shows where he began from and what his final destination is.

Man's life in this world originates from nature, as the Qur'an confirms. But the same book declares also that this very life emanates from Allah:

***. . . and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing (19:9);***

***Surely He it is Who originates and returns (85:13).***

Man is a creature that is brought up in the caressing fold of creation, gets his nourishment from the breast of production, and is connected on this level with life-less nature. But, on the level of origination, he is related to the command of Allah, to His authority:

***His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, "Be", and it is (36:82);***

***Our word for a thing when We intend it, is only that We say to it, "Be", and it is (16:40).***

This much about genesis. As for the return journey, the path divides in two: the path of happiness, and that of unhappiness.

The path of happiness is the shortest route, leading the man to the sublime spiritual heights. It keeps raising his status and enhancing his rank until it takes him to the divine nearness. The path of unhappiness, on the other hand, is a long route that keeps demeaning and debasing him rendering him lowest of the low, until he reaches the divine presence.

***And Allah encompasses them on every side (85:20).***

This subject has been fully explained under the verse;

***Guide us to the straight path (1:6).***

This was a short description of man's path. Details about his life in this world, and before and after it, will be given in their proper place. The verse under discussion is not concerned with those details; it makes only a passing reference to it as it has some bearing on guidance and misguidance, happiness and unhappiness.

***He made them complete seven heavens:*** We shall write about the heavens in Chapter 32 (*as-Sajdah*), God willing.

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